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Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04840 211359Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------065336 212100Z /15
R 211300Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9322
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4840

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, PINT, LE, SY
SUBJECT: HOSS ON HOSS-ASSAD DISCUSSIONS AT LATTAKIA

REF: BEIRUT 4782

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR WAKEFIELD CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER AL-HOSS AUGUST 20 TO FIND OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED AT HOSS-ASSAD TALKS IN LATTAKIA. HOSS SAID HE HAD PRESSED THE SYRIANS HARD ON THEIR REACTION TO CHRISTIAN MILITIA SNIPING BY DISPROPORTIONATE BOMBARDMENT, WHICH WAS DISASTROUS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. THE SYRIAN REPLIED, WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO? THE MORALE OF AN ARMY REQUIRES THAT IT FIRE BACK WHEN FIRED UPON, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. THE SYRIANS CONTINUED, IF THERE ARE ANY OTHER WAYS TO DO IT, OR ANY OTHER TARGETS, LET US KNOW; IF WE CAN ATTACK THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN SOME MORE DIRECT WAY, RATHER THAN BY SIMPLY BOMBARDING THE SUBURBS FROM WHICH THEY ARE SNIPING, TELL US. HOSS SAID HE
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COULD NOT REPLY TO THIS SINCE IT IS A POLITICAL DECISION WHICH MUST BE LEFT UP TO SARKIS. BRITISH AMBASSADOR DID NOT PURSUE THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE WITH HOSS SINCE NEEDLESS TO SAY WAKEFIELD DID NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO BE INVOLVED IN SUCH A POLITICALLY LOADED SUBJECT.

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2. HOSS ALSO TOLD WAKEFIELD THAT HE HAD HELD A LONG DISCUSSION WITH THE SYRIANS ON THE NEED FOR SOME FORM OF "POLITICAL ADVANCE." HOSS WAS NOT SPECIFIC, BUT SAID THAT HE AND SARKIS ARE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT THAT THERE IS NO USE TRYING TO FORM ANOTHER GOVERNMENT BEFORE FORMULATING THE POLITICAL POLICIES ON THE BASIS OF WHICH THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ASKED TO SERVE. THESE ARE TO BE ENUNCIATED BY PRESIDENT SARKIS, WHO WOULD THEN FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. MEANWHILE, HOSS IS WORKING HARD ON THE PROJECT. ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL SIDE, HOSS TOLD WAKEFIELD HE IS IN FAVOR OF A CERTAIN DEGREE OF DECENTRALIZATION, GOING FARTHER THAN THE MINIMAL METHODS ORIGINALLY THOUGHT OF AT THE TIME OF SARKIS' ACCESSION, BUT NOT REPEAT NOT AS FAR-REACHING AS THE SWISS CANTONAL MODEL.
KINSOLVING

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